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Environmental Stewardship: A Synthetic Narrative of Western and Islamic Philosophies

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Abstract

Environmental ethic to safeguard environment for future generations is the primordial challenge and a much-needed debate faced by humanity today. Generation alpha are born with environmental challenges such as: global warming, scarcity of resources, food chain disruptions and loss of biodiversity etc. It has been proven time and again that the current generation has to reserve resources and conserve environment for generations yet to come. This task is undertaken by both ethics and religion as well. A common debate among environmentalists is regarding environmental stewardship, i.e., whether human beings are stewards (or trustees) on this planet to conserve and nurture its resources. In this paper, we will tend to seek the answer from both Western and Islamic perspectives. The first two sections will focus on this. The aim of this paper is to explore what Islamic and western morality has to say about the ecosystem; and how it enables us to restore the ecological balance on Earth. The last section would analyze and compare both perspectives in the light of plausibility of implementation; it would also preview future prospect for protecting our environment.

Keywords: Social Evolution, Science of Culture, Social Darwinism, Positivism historiography

Introduction

The Millennium brings forth the technological era at its peak_ reshaping our customs, cultures and life styles. Although, much of it is to be appreciated, but modern world comes with ethical concerns that are essential to address, otherwise the consequences would be too catastrophic to rectify later.Environmental problems are connected with three vital concerns: namely, economical consideration, challenges to societal infrastructure and Ethical concerns.[1] The most important among these is the ethical concern which is basic theme of this paper as well. This paper will view environmental stewardship under epistemological lens of Western and Islamic philosophies.

[1]Michael E. Mann, "Do Global Warming and Climate Change Represent A Serious Threat to our Welfare and Environment?" *Social Philosophy and Policy* 26, no. 2 (June 2009): 193-230.

2. Environmental Ethics and the Rights of Future Generations in Western Thought

The inability of human beings to protect the environment, even if they are economically strong, plagued environmentalists and the philosophers for a decade. This is where ethical concerns enter to deal with these crises. Environmental ethics not merely invokes a sense of responsibility of man to understand the environmental crisis in detail; but it also draws our attention towards the fact that man has been alienated from his environment and nature.

Various western environmental theories have been proposed to overcome these crucial scenarios. These theories revolve around the role of an individual towards his environment.[2] One important discussion among these theories is based on a dichotomy between two groups. One regards human beings as the masters of the Earth and other regard them as its Saviour.[3] To choose between the dominion and stewardship would change the entire attitude of a person towards environmental debate accordingly.[4] Brief overviews of these theories are:

Classical philosophers like Aristotle view nature as a teleological symbol of flourishing human beings. Whereas, enlightened philosophers like Rene Descartes (1596-1650) and John Locke (1632-1704) views portray humans' dominion over nature.

The belief that we are all one life entails that every organism irrespective of their species is a part of nature. Thus, "Our well-being is an aspect of the well-being of the nature as a whole."[5] The idea was developed in the philosophy under the heading of Deep ecology.[6] It supports the view that living beings, apart from humans, also possess intrinsic value as opposed to their instrumental worth.[7] It provides a holistic version of a balance eco-system. The contemporary debates in the holistic perspective are nature mysticism, green movement, land ethics,[8] human population control, Cultural Eco-feminism,[9] animal-welfarism, care-based ethics and simple living.[10]

Environmental Individualism can be expressed in numerous ways. It does not follow from this that man by his very nature is selfish rather it is the contrast between man and nature that exposed this view to extreme objections. It provides an anthropocentric picture that man is all in all and that he can use nature for his personal benefits even if it includes violation and manipulation of nature. Deontological and utilitarian ethics are part and parcel of environmental individualism.

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[2]P. Wesley Schultz, "New Environmental Theories: Empathizing with Nature: The Effects of Perspective Taking on Concern for Environmental Issues," *Journal of Social Issues* 56 (3), (2000): 391–406. https://doi.org/10.1111/0022-4537.00174.

[3]Schultz, "New Environmental Theories: Empathizing with Nature: The Effects of Perspective Taking on Concern for Environmental Issues, 391-406.

[4]Gregory E Hitzhusen, and Mary Evelyn Tucker, "The Potential of Religion for Earth Stewardship," *Frontiers in Ecology and the Environment* 11 (7), (2013): 368–76. https://doi.org/10.1890/120322.

[5]Vernon Pratt, Jane Howarth, and Emily Brady, *Environment and Philosopy* (New York: Routledge, 2000).

[6]Arne Naess, a Norwegian philosopher, is the founder of Deep Ecology movement.

[7]J. Baird Callicott, and Robert Frodeman, *Encyclopedia of Environmental Ethics and Philosophy*. (Farmington Hills: Gale, Cengage Learning, 2008), 259.

[8]Land ethics is introduced by Aldo Leopold. It entails that mankind is part of an ecological community; and for the integrity, stability, and beauty of the land ethical behavior is essential.

[9]Cultural eco-feminism is a latest version which is beyond the scope of this paper. It regards violation of women as part of violating nature.

[10]Rob White, "Environmental Issues and the Criminological Imagination," *Theoretical Criminology* 7 (4), (2003): 483–506. https://doi.org/10.1177/13624806030074005.

The lust for land and power urged human race to develop nuclear weapons. Utilitarianists would ignore the fact that these chemical and nuclear wastes are later deposited in water, air or soil.[11] The radioactive reactors and atomic bombs contain carcinogenic elements like Strontium89 and 90, Uranium, Cesium-137, and Iodine-131; and exposure to low-level and high-level radiation damages tissues, cells and DNA causing genetic mutations, cancers, leukemia, birth defects, and reproductive, immune and endocrine system disorders.[12] According to utilitarianism, war benefits humans and overall weapon industry, so the impact of nuclear wastes on future generations is completely dismissed.[13]

On the contrary, Kantian ethics believed in care base ethics which in turn will benefit mankind. For e.g. due to rapid depletion of the ozone UVA I, UVA II and UVB penetrates the Earth causing skin cancers, skin aging, eye diseases and mal-functions the immune system.[14] So Kantian ethics would imply care ethics as it will benefit humans.

Gaia hypothesis[15] maintains that the Earth is a self-regulating system that supports the conditions that are essential for the existence and survival of life.[16] Lovelock illustrates that the Earth is a super-organism and it holds a certain capacity to repair itself.[17] The salinity of the oceans and regulation of temperature of the atmosphere are instances of this theory. The idea of Gaia hypothesis established various environmental fields such as Biochemistry, Geo-physiology and Earth system sciences. They establish that man appears to have a central character whose accomplishments are confined within this carrying capacity. Thus, man is responsible to sustain the balance in the Environment.[18]

One is at lost to understand which theory is more plausible, whether of anthropocentricism or of holism.[19] How to sort out the confusion between the Gaia Hypothesis and Deep Ecology? Likewise, if one stick with the position of individualism how would he cope with social nature of man? If one holds the position that we-are-all-one-life then how would we define the importance of being an individual? To the readers' utter disappointment I would not address these questions on the basis of latter Western theories. Rather I would dig down answers from Islamic perspective and would see how they can connect to some of the above theories while refuting the others.

[11]Although, government allow permissible nuclear waste to be thrown in water whose reactivity decreased to a minimum level. Yet it is unhealthy.

[12]"Radioactive Waste and Pollution," May 14, 2014. http://www.riverkeeper.org/campaigns/stop-polluters/indian-point/radioactive-waste/ (accessed May 15, 2014).

[13]Callicott, and Robert Frodeman, *Encyclopedia of Environmental Ethics and Philosophy.*

[14]Stephen Q Wang, and John H. Epstein, *Understanding UVA and UVB.* May 12, 2014. http://www.skincancer.org/prevention/uva-and-uvb/understanding-uva-and-uvb (accessed May 15, 2014).

[15]James Lovelock, and Lynn Margulis put forth this theory in 1970's.

[16]Callicott, and Robert Frodeman, *Encyclopedia of Environmental Ethics and Philosophy*, 449.

[17]Robin Attfield, *Environmental Ethics* (Polity Press, 2003).

[18]Rob White, *Crimes against Nature* (Willan, 2013). https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315880723

[19]P. Wesley Schultz, "New Environmental Theories: Empathizing with Nature: The Effects of Perspective Taking on Concern for Environmental Issues," 391-406.

3. Environmental Ethics and the Rights of Future Generations in Islamic Thought

3.1. Islam's Mandate on Individual's Responsibility towards Environment for Future Generations

It has been a well-established fact that the current generation had to reserve resources and conserve environment for future generations and Muslim *Ummah*.[20] Both Western ethics and religion tends to cater this task. Where ethicists take this issue on moral grounds, religious undertake this task as obligatory, specifically Islam. Islam provides a holistic framework; and theological and logical ground for conserving environment and mindful usage of resources. Qur'ān, Hadīth and Islamic Jurisprudence (*fiqh*) all provide guidance to maintain balance (*mizan*) between humanity and ecological community.

The concept of Stewardship (*Khalifa*) has been dominant in religious approaches both in monotheistic and manmade religions.[21] Islam provides the best illustration of man's Stewardship upon Earth. Therefore, in order to decide whether we are bestowed with the stewardship of this Earth we must seek insight from the Holy Qur'ān. The Qur'ān clearly identified role of men as vicegerent and trustee (*amin*) upon this Earth.

> A *Khalifa* is defined as one who takes over a position, a power, a trust, and who holds it reliably and in harmony with its grantor – in this position, *Allah* or God… A *Khalifa* does not violate the trust or break a rule. Adam, the prophet and the progenitor of the human race was appointed by God as *Khalifa* on Earth. Consequently, every man and women has inherited power and accountability in relation to the Earth's resources and all its life forms.[22]

Allah entrusted mankind as a trustee (*amin*) safeguard the Earth, its environment and resources. Humans are indeed not the master of the earth; rather he is the savior and custodian of Earth and ecosystem not only for present generation, but also for future generation and inhabitants that co-share this planet. The holy Qur'ān, clearly proclaims that neglecting to conserve environment and Earth resources violates the ethical principle of justice (*'adl*) and the higher objectives of Islamic law (*maqāṣid al-sharīʿah*).[23] "Do not commit abuse on the Earth, spreading corruption. Verily, Allah does not love the corrupters."[24]

The narration is direct that it is imperative to avoid actions that may harbor harmful consequences for the ecosystem. Man as vicegerent of Allah on Earth means more of a responsibility towards nature instead of dominion. Henceforth, in the light of Islamic perspective, man holds an inseparable relation with nature. The imbalance between man and nature is equivalent to loss of harmony between man and God. Thus, negative individualism has no place in Islam. This does not entail that Islam suppresses individual nature of man rather it invokes a positive individualism that is essential for spirituality. It is this individualism which never conflicts with social nature of man and his community. Man being the better of all creations (*Ashraf-ul-*

[20]Ali Mohamed Al-Damkhi, "Environmental Ethics in Islam: Principles,Violations, and Future Perspectives," *International Journal of Environmental Studies* 65, no. 1 (2008): 11-31.
[21]Gregory E Hitzhusen, and Mary Evelyn Tucker, "The Potential of Religion for Earth Stewardship," 368-376.
[22]Al-Damkhi, "Environmental Ethics in Islam: Principles,Violations, and Future Perspectives," 6.
[23]Al-Damkhi, "Environmental Ethics in Islam: Principles,Violations, and Future Perspectives," 11-31.
[24]al-Qasas 28:77.

Makhluqat) does not make him the master of this Earth rather it gives him a certain responsibility towards everything that exist in it (both biotic and abiotic factors).

Unfortunately, the lust for money and power invokes appetites in humans that are directed towards an unending mode. It is exactly how tyrannize theories claim man as the lord upon this Earth. So, it is obligatory for current generation to act wisely and with compassion with respect to the environment so that the next generation may flourishes. Islamic ethics endorses to avoid wastefulness of resources (*israf*) and adopt moderate consumption for this particular reason. Moreover, Islam takes a forward-looking approach for decision making. It is self-evident in Islamic tradition, be it Qur'ān and *Sunnah*, that one should always take precautionary measures to avoid and prevent environmental degradation. Therefore, it is incumbent on every Muslim to conserve and nurture Earth and its resources. The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) proclaimed in similar vein: Anas ibn Malik reported that the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, "If the Final Hour comes while you have a shoot of a plant in your hands and it is possible to plant it before the Hour comes, you should plant it."[25]

Hence, it is our spiritual and moral duty to leave this Earth a better place regardless of how much we have at stake as a person. Our personal gains and benefits are benign in the larger scheme of the Universe. This concept of what one leaves behind in this world is defined as the legacy or footprint (*athar*) in Islamic tradition. According to this concept good deeds to conserve nature and environment is termed as an ongoing charity (*ṣadaqah jāriyah*). Thus, by planting trees and forests, preserving natural habitas and conserving natural resources one can reap long term benefit both in this world and hereafter.[26] This is because our Prophet (PBUH) has always preached: "When a human dies, all their deeds come to an end except three: a continuing charity, beneficial knowledge, or a righteous child who prays for them."[27]

Due to the ongoing nature of this spiritual reward, Muslims are motivated to maintain sustainable practices; and rationally comprehend the consequences and ecological impact of their decisions in the near future.[28] Instead of immediate gratification, Islam cultivates a consciousness of environmental mindfulness (*taqwa al-bīʾah*)—that elevates time, be it past, present or future. "Let those (guardians) be concerned for those they would leave behind, if they were to leave weak offspring behind them. So let them fear Allah and speak words of appropriate justice."[29]

It is mandatory for a responsible environmental behavior to ensure environmental justice. This could be possible via educating our generation, making people aware of the ecological impact and its consequences; and proactive inquiry.[30] Islam emphasizes a lot on pursuit of knowledge. In regard to environmental ethics, this entails that Islam supports scientific inquiry and environmental research, policy evaluation, and ethical debate. It is moral responsibility to spread awareness regarding environmental hazards such as ozone depletion, using toxic substances in agriculture,

[25]Muhammad b Ismail Bukhari, *Al Adab al Mufrad*, "Book of Attending to this world," https://sunnah.com/adab/27/4

[26]Abdul Basir Mohamad, and Nurbazla Ismail, "Environmental Preservation and Water Pollution from the Islamic Perspective," *Samarah: Jurnal Hukum Keluarga Dan Hukum Islam* 7 (2), (2023): 997–97. https://doi.org/10.22373/sjhk.v7i2.16019.

[27]Muslim b Hajjaj, *Sahih Muslim*, The Book of Wills, Chapter: "What Reward Reaches A Man After His Death," Hadith 1631, https://sunnah.com/muslim:1631.

[28]Hwa Yol Jung, "The Paradox of Man and Nature: Reflections on Man's Ecological Predicament," The Centennial Review 18 (1), (1974): 1–28. https://doi.org/10.2307/23738056.

[29]An-Nisa 4:09.

[30]Hwa Yol Jung, "The Paradox of Man and Nature: Reflections on Man's Ecological Predicament," 1-28.

micro-plastics and nuclear pollution, water wastage and oil spillage in oceans etc.[31] Humans are in fact accountable for their actions as they are stewards of the planet Earth.[32] This is where Islamic ethics differs from secular ethics. While the western world views environmental ethics within utilitarian, political and ecological economics grounds; Islam adds Divine accountability to it, herby making it a matter of eternal consequences.

3.2. Islam's Mandate on Conserving Nature

One of the major causes of imbalance in the ecosystem is that the materialistic phenomenon leaves no room for humans to harmonize with nature. In "How Much Land Does a Man Need?" (1886) Leo Tolstoy beautifully depicts the greedy nature of man that ends only with his death.[33] The intrinsic nature of self and a spiritual journey is required to comprehend this which is attainable solely by returning to the practices of Islam. Dr. Absar Ahmad concluded in his article *Ethics and the Environment* that the only feasible solution to uproot environmental crisis is to be found in Islamic world view and Prophetic teachings. "The Qur'ān informs us regarding the other living creatures on this Earth, that they are 'communities like unto you', and even the bee and ant are not neglected." [34]

Ethical considerations in Islam spread an attitude to conserve natural resources and to maintain a level of sustainability.[35] As the Qur'ān claimed: "And We send down from the dripping clouds water pouring forth abundantly, That We may bring forth thereby grain and vegetation, And gardens of luxuriant growth."[36]

Islam prohibits excessive use of anything. All living creatures whether they are humans, plants or animals depends upon water. Since, water is the basic unit of life it is a common right of every living creature. Human beings do not have the monopoly over the Earth and its resources. In the holy Qur'ān Allah proclaimed: "Have We not made the earth so as to hold the living and the dead? And We placed thereon high mountains, and gave you sweet water to drink. Woe on that day unto those who reject *the truth!"* [37]

Animal welfarism is thought to be initiated by the western philosophies, but Islam provided mankind the rules to secure the rights of animals 1400 years ago. Constructing and developing through the resources given by Creator is viable only if we are not usurping rights of other species. Cutting woods and forests will cause the loss of habitat and humans will suffer indirectly due to this. Therefore, planting trees were mentioned in various Hadīth.

Moderation work as a key element in Islamic morality as it confines mankind to simple living. Islam clearly differentiates between a prosperous and an affluent life. It foretold delimits of wealth

[31]R. H. Ganten, "Review of The International Oil Pollution Compensation Fund," In *The International Maritime Organisation*, edited by Samir Mankabady (London: Routledge, 1984).

[32]Rania Kamla, Sonja Gallhofer, and Jim Haslam, "Islam, Nature and Accounting: Islamic Principles and the Notion of Accounting for the Environment," *Accounting Forum* 30 (3), (2006): 245–65. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.accfor.2006.05.003.

[33]The short story ends on a note that "six feet from head to toe is all that a man needs."

[34]Absar Ahmad, "Ethics and the Environment," Chap. 11 in *Knowledge-Morality Nexus*, edited by Dr. Absar Ahmad (Lahore: Concept Media Books, 1995), 241-255.

[35]Odeh Rashed Al-Jayyousi, *Islam and Sustainable Development-New Worldviews* (Gower, 2016). https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315589947.

[36]Al- Naba 78:15-17.

[37]Al-Mursalat 77: 26-27.

and greed.[38] Lest mortals have understood this, they would not be under these environmental and moral crises. "And *We destroyed* Korah and Pharaoh and Haman. And Moses did come to them with manifest Signs, but they behaved proudly in the earth, yet they could not outstrip Us." [39]

Therefore, restoring our lives to the spirit of moderation would certainly conserve nature from further deterioration. The principles of moderation based on Qur'ān and Sunnah are advanced by numerous Islamic scholars. The general principles are that nature is created by God for the benefit of mankind; hence it ought to be respected. We should protect and sustain nature. As highest among the creations of God, human beings should contribute the chief role to conserve the eco-system. Otherwise, we will be held accountable before God on the Day of Judgment.[40] Excessive use, destruction and distortions are equivalent to tyranny, hence they are forbidden as they will create an imbalance environment. Human benefits cannot be maximizing at the expense of other species and deterioration of nature. To revolt against this violation of ecosystem is our responsibility, so as a true believer Muslims should become conscious of these problems and help solving them.[41]

Additionally, it is also worth pondering that it is difficult for people to understand what they cannot perceive with the naked eye or witness directly let alone value. For instance, the significance of phytoplankton and trees in oxygen production of the Earth is common knowledge, yet people ignored their destruction and deterioration because of the perceptual gap that they are not immediately getting affected by it. Islam addresses this gap by stressing upon having faith in both the visible (*shahāda*) and unseen (*ghayb*); since both are dimensions of reality. Nature is symbolically represented as signs (*ayat*) for the existence of God. Qur'ān specifically endorses to reflect and contemplate on nature. "And to Allah belongs the dominion of the Heaven and Earth, and Allah is over all things. Indeed, in the creation of the heavens and earth, and the alternation of the night and the day are signs for those of understanding."[42]

Similarly in *Surah Qaf*, "And the Earth, We spread it out, and cast therein firmly set mountains and We have made to grow therein of all beautiful kinds; to give sight and as a reminder to every servant who turns to Allah."[43]

Islam, therefore, encourages doing contemplation (*tafakkur*), to enhance moral insight in order to harness and foster long-term ecological responsibility. "And it is He who spread the Earth and made in it firm mountains and rivers, and of all fruits, he has made in it two kinds; He makes the night cover the day; most surely there are signs in this for a people who reflect."[44]

It urges humans to value creations even if they seem invisible or economically invaluable. Likewise, Islamic ethics maintains that actions have consequences that may transcend time and

[38]Savas Alpay, Ibrahim Ozdemir, and Dilek Dimerbas, "Review of Environment and Islam," *Journal of Economic Cooperation and Development* 34 (4), (2013): 2–22.

[39]Al-`Ankabut 29: 40.

[40]Rania Kamla, Sonja Gallhofer, and Jim Haslam, "Islam, Nature and Accounting: Islamic Principles and the Notion of Accounting for the Environment," 245–65.

[41]Al-Damkhi, "Environmental Ethics in Islam: Principles,Violations, and Future Perspectives," 11-31.

[42]Al-Imran 3:189-190.

[43]Qaf 50:7-8.

[44]Al-Raad 13:3.

space. Taking deliberate and conscious actions after being aware of their consequences is prime mandate of Islamic teachings. Consider the following verse: "So let man consider his food."[45]

The aforementioned Qur'ānic narration not just implies immediate gratitude upon food; but demands contemplation to examine the food chain, impact of environment and human's own actions on agriculture and moderate consumption for overall sustainability of consumption in the world.[46] These verses in Qur'ān help Muslims to develop ethical foresight to discern long term ecological ramifications of our actions that may have short term benefit. Consider the example of land developmental projects. They are utilizing massive space that is naturally reserved for forests, woods and wildlife. This fragmentation of the habitat posed adverse effects on bio-diversity. The eruption of eco-system is endangering several species to the level of extinction. Moreover, the disequilibrium among amount of species is risking genetic diversity and enhancing animal range to human area. It is extremely difficult to calculate the exact ratio of extinction, but we can infer from the past and be cautious in the future. Research shows that nearly 2000 birds became extinct in the Stone Age; and 50 % species of flora and fauna are missing since 19th century.[47]. Forests fires and global warming is another long term environmental crisis that needs to be dealt with.[48] The rise in sea-level causes glaciers to recede turning into natural disasters like tsunami, floods, heavy rainfall and ocean acidification.[49] Climatic changes will also expand subtropical deserts and causes severe weathers such as hailstorms, cyclones, tornadoes etc.[50] And this catastrophic event occurs because of humans thoughtless actions taken in the first place. Islamic ethics forbade irrational decision based on short term benefits in mind.

To put briefly, Islamic teachings serves as a guide to develop frameworks and strategies to evaluate current models of production and economic growth. Unfortunately, this task has been rigorously performed by Europeans instead of Muslim world. Ziauddin Sardar pointed out the fact that the reason Muslims swayed from Environmental ethics is because there is a gap between Islamic environmental theories, their planning and in the current practices of the Muslim world.[51] Where lust of affluence and power resides in the rulers, no light of Islam could reside in their black hearts. The only possible evasion is to practice the environmental principles given by Islam. Similarly, Hossein Nasr established that the link between man and nature is evident in Qur'ān. The Qur'ān contains massive ideas of everything within it_ ranging from the quest of soul to phenomenon of the entire universe. His stance is bent towards spirituality where in order to seek nature of God, man need to restore nature itself, "Man is created in the image of God, yet as an animal, so that from one side the spiritual world is reflected in him and from the other the animal world. His destiny is inextricably tied to both the spiritual and natural worlds. That is why the

[45]Al-Abas 80:24.

[46]Odeh Rashed Al-Jayyousi, *Islam and Sustainable Development-New Worldviews.* https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315589947.

[47]Gareth J. Russell, Thomas M. Brook, John L. Gittleman, and Stuart L. Pim, "The Future of Biodiversity," *Science AAAS* 269, no. 5222 (July 1995): 347-350.

[48]Morena Mills et al., "Reconciling Development and Conservation under Coastal Squeeze from Rising Sea Level," Conservation Letters 9, no. 5 (December 17, 2015): 361–68, https://doi.org/10.1111/conl.12213.

[49]Nobert P. Psuty, "Review of *Sea-Level Problems on the Rise the Rising Tide: Global Warming and World Sea Levels* by Lynne T. Edgerton." *BioScienc*e 43 (3), (1993): 172–73. https://doi.org/10.2307/1312024.

[50]E. Katz. "Replacement and Responsibility: The Problem of Ecological Restoration as Moral Repair," *Ethics and the Environment* 23 (2018): 17-28.

[51]Ziauddin Sardar, ed. *The Touch of Midas* (Goa: The Other India Press, 1984).

apolcatastasis or the final restoration means the passage of spiritualized nature to God and the restoration of all things including animals and trees."[52]

He holds the view that only Islamic ethics and spirituality could extinguish the havoc created by modern Western science and technology.[53]

4. Future Prospect of our Ecology A Synthesis of Islamic and Western Perspectives

4.1. Implementing Western and Islamic Philosophies to deal with Environmental Crisis

The roots behind the contemporary Environmental quandary cannot be accurately depicted; however, a sketchy outlook entails that rapid development of technology, nuclear and chemical wastes, uses of CFC's are major causes of pollution, global warming and Ozone depletion. These traditional crises have been merged now with new imposed threats on the Environment that human race face today; and it is becoming an ever-growing threat for the future. These newly immersed issues are eco-feminism, loss of habitat and biodiversity; imbalance of ecology and communities; endangered species, disruption of food chain[54] and fatal diseases due to Ozone depletions, pollution and nuclear wastes. Unfortunately, due to limited scope of this paper, we cannot address these issues here as they deserve separate attention in order to comprehend the true nature of our predicament.

Environmental crisis would have not ceased unless human beings holds certain respect for nature.[55] This respect would be generated solely through consideration for both biotic and abiotic factors. It entails that living beings, other than humans, and non-living things (water, mountains, land etc.) should not be considered as goal-directed mechanism. There is a great deal of difference between nature and a machine (say a robot). Robots have a goal directed mechanism but nature is free and has a purpose of its own.[56] Paul Taylor maintained a similar notion for the 'respect of nature', but he gave more importance to human beings as we by nature are dependent on it for our survival. Pratt, Howarth, & Brady widen this prospect by maintaining that "we belong to natural 'communities', within which we owe the obligations of membership."[57] Based on the study in first two sections, lets compare and contrast both Islamic and Western philosophies regarding environmental stewardship:

Table 1. Comparative study of Western and Islamic Philosophies on Environmental Stewadship

Comparative Aspects	Western Philosophy	Islamic Philosophy
Views on Nature	Theoretical based; varies (as one theory supercede another)	Sacred; attributed as signs (*ayat*) for the existence of God

[52]Nasr, Seyyed Hossein, *Man and Nature* (George Allen & Unwin, 1968),

[53]S. H. Nasr, "Islam and the Environmental Crisis," *Islamic Quarterly*, 34 (4), (1990): 217–227.

[54]E. Katz. "Replacement and Responsibility: The Problem of Ecological Restoration as Moral Repair," 17-28.

[55]Savas Alpay, Ibrahim Ozdemir, and Dilek Dimerbas, "Review of Environment and Islam," 2–22.

[56]This could be understood in Aristotelian notion of 'form' or in modern version of chromosomes acting as 'blueprints'. Because chromosome blueprints are made in such a way, so that it may choose from some possible future - a pattern of life.

[57]Vernon Pratt, Jane Howarth, and Emily Brady, *Environment and Philosopy*, 118.

Comparative Aspects	Western Philosophy	Islamic Philosophy
Responsibility	Varied as per theory from master to community based ethics.[58]	Obligatory moral responsibility as stewards (*Khalifa*), trustee (*amin*) on Earth
Accountability	On governmental level; and future generations	Divine accountability; and future generations
Consumption of Resources	Critiqued as per modern western theories (varies)	Wastefullness (*Israf*) is forbidden; and moderate consumption is permissible
Sustainability	Emerging value	Intrinsic for ecological balance (*mizan*)
Implementing the Framework	Despite lacking stronger foundation, European societiesand governing bodies are stable and firm to take serious control measures to restore balance oninternational level	Although, Islamic ethics is structured upon stronger foundations, yet Muslim nations fail to implement them on governmental level due to economical instability and lack of will

Table 2. Similarities between Western and Islamic Philosophies on Environmental Stewadship

Similar Aspects	Islamic And Western Philosophy
Environmental Stewardship	Both perspectives converge at the point of necessity of Environmental Stewardship
Failures	Both perspectives fail and compromise equilibrium when it comes to gaining immense wealth, super power, nuclear wars.

4.2. Restoring Ecological Equilibrium

Once we have a common consent on the fact that we are indeed custodians of the Earth we need further plan to sustain our Environment to a level of equilibrium. Western scholars have a consensus upon basic environmental agenda. According to Gary E. Varner, preservation and conservation of species and habitats; reduction in pollution and human population are key elements to sustain nature.[59] However, it is to be noted that environmental ethics beyond religious circle is void and ambiguous as it lacks a firm foundation. This foundation lies in Qur'ānic principles that not only identify man as trustee upon this Earth but also bestowed him the responsibility to conserve nature (as discussed in the previous sections). Failing to accomplish this will lead to accountability and eternal consequences.[60]

[58]Callicott, and Robert Frodeman, *Encyclopedia of Environmental Ethics and Philosophy.*

[59]Gary E. Varner, *In Nature's Interests?* (Oxford University Press, 1998).

[60]Rania Kamla, Sonja Gallhofer, and Jim Haslam, "Islam, Nature and Accounting: Islamic Principles and the Notion of Accounting for the Environment," 245–65.

To summarize the current study, the rationale of Islam regarding ecological ethics rests upon *Khilafat* (vicegerency) and *amanah* (trustee). Men possess reason to choose between what is morally correct and what is evil, so it is their responsibility to be truthful to God's laws and his nature. If men abuse and violate laws of nature they are doomed to suffer and bring upon severe loss in future. Indeed, we are the survivors of nature, but that survival is possible if we understand environmental ethics in its spiritual sense. "In fact, man is the channel of grace for nature; through his active participation in the spiritual world, he casts light into the world of nature. He is the mouth through which nature breathes and lives. Because of the intimate connection between man and nature, the inner state of man is reflected in the external order."[61]

This spirituality lies in the Qur'ān and being Muslims, we must abide a road towards moderation in using earth resources as well as to conserve habitat. In addition, animal welfare is not only our concern rather Qur'ān and Sharī'ah clearly invokes our sense of responsibility towards them. Living a simple life would enable us to achieve this.

At this point it is important to note that the simple principles of Islam regarding the relationship between man and nature look plausible as a theory; but in practice neither the individual nor the society feels being the savior of the nature, both the individual and the society feel dominated by the nature. The struggle to survive and to live a better life almost blinds them about their responsibilities if any towards nature. On the contrary, Western world are stable enough to think and do something about the issue at hand. They have implemented policies to regulate the balance within the ecology. Anyhow, there are different nations who took the issue seriously; they have put awards for individuals and groups for reducing the imbalance. They have put limits on industries to reduce the amount of pollution. Similarly, other nations should maintain firm restrictions on technology utilizing CFC's. They should cancel the license of those industries that are using it even after they have been banned. In addition, industrial areas should be established far away from living areas. However, personal greed for being super power; and to gain immense wealth can override the obligations towards environment.

Typically for this scenario, Islamic principle of moderation needs such a systematic implementation at the national and international level which would be acceptable for both developed and undeveloped nations. We need something more than this principle; we need a frame work, a systematic infrastructure at national and international level; and spiritual contemplation to address multiple environmental problems. Islamic ethics, as we have seen in previous section, can accomplish this feat. Although, restricting nuclear research can only be a dream! But we have certain things in our hands such as reducing pollution, preserving habitat and to control population.[62] As the proverb goes: Charity begins at home: we need to maintain simple living and moderate consumption as stewards on this planet. We are indeed the beholder of environmental stewardship where every tree, every drop of water, every species, and every ecosystem becomes a trust (*amānah*) from Allah.

In coming years, it would be difficult to deal with the problem of unstable ecosystem. For a permanent solution to this problem, we must not only seek guidance from Islamic perspective but

[61]Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Man and Nature,* 96.

[62]Abdul Basir Mohamad, and Nurbazla Ismail, "Environmental Preservation and Water Pollution from the Islamic Perspective," *Samarah: Jurnal Hukum Keluarga Dan Hukum Islam* 7 (2), (2023): 997–97. https://doi.org/10.22373/sjhk.v7i2.16019

also consider it obligatory and ethically imperative. Neglecting it is akin to a flaw in the life styles and priorities that we have set for ourselves. We need a different perspective to see the need for moderation. We need to understand that man and ecosystem are not separated. The only difference in both world views is that Islam does not compartmentalize ethics. While the western world increasingly defines progress through consumption and growth, Islam redefines it through stewardship *(Khilafat)*, trust (*amanah)*, balance (*mizān*), and sustainability through moderation (avoiding *isrāf*).[63] It calls upon humanity to expand its circle of compassion and responsibility: not only to their own species, but to all manifestations of life, whether visible or invisible. By doing so, even if we cannot resume our planet to an ideal state; we can still abolish further deterioration or at least maintain a balance, i.e. minimizing the factors that are harmful for environment. Together, both these traditions can converge at the point of environmental stewardship; enabling the world to contribute to a more holistic, ethical, and sustainable approach to addressing the global environmental crisis.

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[63]Odeh Rashed Al-Jayyousi, *Islam and Sustainable Development-New Worldviews.* https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315589947.

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